797 by Fa. Antonino and Fa. Pelino de Castrovalva. This mission holds some five hundred Indians of the Mundurucu tribe.

[124] The missionary Fa. Pelino who was alone there, his companion having already left Bacabal, lent me as an interpreter a Mundurucu Indian who understands and speaks the Portuguese and Tupi languages in addition to his own dialect.

114 I continued my journey up the Tapajoz and reached the mouth of the Cadereri River, an eastern tributary of the Tapajoz, five days after leaving the Mission of Bacabal.

There, according to what I had been told, I was supposed to meet a bold frontiersman who knew the way to the central villages. Unhappily, however, I did not find him, and the members of my crew knew nothing about the course of the Cadereri River.

Here I was, perplexed for lack of guides and information, when two Mundurucu savages appeared upon the beach.

We asked them, through the interpreter, how long it would take us to reach the source of the Cadereri.

[201 805] The older of the two savages responded with the following sign: with his index finger he pointed due east, and then he traced a semicircle following the apparent course of the sun to the west, accompanying this gesture with expressive looks, motions and sounds; and he repeated this slowly and distinctly six times in such a way that before the interpreter could explain his message I had already understood that the savage meant it would take us six days.

He also told us that we would meet other Indians at the headwaters of the Cadereri, who could guide us to the village of [103] Necodemos whence he and his companion came. [75]

I was impressed by this name of Necodemos which the Mundurucu gave one of their main villages, for it is the name of the generous and compassionate Jew who bestowed simple funeral dignities upon Christ -- a shroud to enclose his body and a sepulcher to protect it.

I do not know why the Mundurucu gave this name to their village, but I imagine that the coincidence of names is no more than a mere accident.

In any case, I decided to seek the village of Necodemos in preference to any other.

12:Murphy E-5 (1952-1953) 1960
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121 to know how the parts of the system are related to one another and to the totality. It is also necessary to understand how the system becomes a coherent and integrated set of social relationships in terms of observable behavior. I attempt to do this in the present work. A functional analysis of social structure has another important value, and one that is not fully utilized by anthropologists. Since a basic assumption of the method is that a system has internal coherence, it is possible to see clues to the past in items that do not fit into the present. This, of course, is reminiscent of the now unpopular use of "survivals" for purposes of historical reconstruction. I do not think, however, that I have engaged in a form of "conjectural" history. Rather, I have attempted to relate my clues, the nonfunctional and disfunctional items of the present, to the probable structure of Mundurucú society as it existed in the past. And I have attempted to marshal as much historical and ethnographic data as possible to validate my reconstructions. In this way, I have avoided speculations based on one or another shred of data and have remained within the framework of structural analysis. And, it might be added, I have thus tried to bring my historical material under the canons of internal criticism of historical data.

178 Economy and social structure have changed a great deal during the past century and a half of Mundurucú history, making the tribe an especially good subject for this type of study. I have relied to a certain extent on older informants for data of past conditions. The memories of the old people are variable in accuracy, richness, and content, and I tried where possible to corroborate points with a number of informants. It would, however, be naïve to assume that material obtained from an old informant, however well corroborated, is valid for the "aboriginal," or pre-contact, period. A sixty-year-old man—of whom there are

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12: Murphy E-5 (1952-1953) 1960
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very few among the Mundurucú—interviewed in 1952 was born in 1892. Since his most reliable recollections probably date from his adolescence, his memories of things seen and heard will be of value only for the time after about 1905—and I am being generous here. The period of 1905 and shortly thereafter is within the last decade of the rubber boom and is well over a century after the first contact between Mundurucú and whites. In short, it has been necessary to exercise great caution with these data.

A good deal of the data from informants were datable, within broad limits, by their context. Thus, when I heard that a duty of the chief in times past was to "buy goods for the people," I knew that I was not faced with the pristine. And, fortunately, there is some highly useful documentary history on the Mundurucú. One does not get a smooth historical continuum replete with detail, but it is possible to discern in the written records some of the large-scale changes that have taken place in the society. I have avoided the method, common in acculturation studies, of working with two cultural base lines, the aboriginal and the present, and comparing the two. This procedure may have some value when the transfer of items of culture from one society to another through diffusion is studied, but it does not lend itself to the analysis of the continual interplay of the forces of stability and change acting on a social system.

The Mundurucú present advantages for the student of social change. It has been said that there are three socially and culturally distinct Mundurucú populations, which differ in degree of change—a differentiation that took place only during the past twenty-five years as a result of migration. This study does not include the population of the Tapajós River, where Mundurucú society is most drastically changed, but concentrates on the people of the savan-